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SUBJECT: NINEWA: A PROVINCIAL COUNCILMEMBER'S VIEWS ON LEADERSHIP CHANGES AFTER THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial Reconstruction Team Ninewa, State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Nineva Provincial Council and Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) member, Gevara Zia, said he believed Sunni Arab political parties would control the Nineva provincial government after elections were held later this year. Zia claimed a "more representative" provincial government would better serve the public and improve security. He claimed the current Kurdish-dominated provincial council was more concerned about political posturing than providing basic services, such as electricity and clean water, and as a result had become estranged from the public. Zia said the building of political party coalitions for the elections, as well as the outcome of future Kurdish symbolic influence in Nineva, would largely depend on how alignments were formed in the new national assembly in Baghdad. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) PRT Poloff met with Gevara Zia, Nineva Provincial Council and Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) member, in Mosul on March 4.

PROVINCIAL ELECTION (RE)ALIGNMENTS

¶3. (C) Zia claimed Sunnis would control the majority of seats in the provincial council, including the governorship and vice governorship, after elections were held later this year. He said the Kurdish coalition was trying to gather support from smaller minority political parties to counter Sunni domination, but that their success would be marginal. He said many smaller parties were afraid to align with the Kurds for fear that Sunnis would win by large margins and "punish" them. Zia claimed there was currently a split between the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and the Iraqi National Dialogue Council (INDC) on several issues. However, he said the two groups were still working on a broader coalition with the Turkmen Front, the Iraqi Communist Party, and members of former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's coalition, the National Iraqi List. Zia said he expected the Shabek Democratic Assembly to build a coalition with Shia political parties of the United Iraqi Coalition, since it was unlikely Shias would align with either Sunnis or the Kurds. Zia said ADM was uncertain how

to proceed for the elections: whether they would stay independent, side with other minority parties, or join a larger coalition. He said it would depend on the political atmosphere leading up to the election.

SUNNI PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BETTER SERVE THE PUBLIC

¶ 14. (C) When asked whether he thought a predominantly Sunni Arab provincial council would function more successfully than the current Kurdish one, Zia replied with a resounding "yes." He said many people in Ninewa did not believe the current provincial government was "legal" or represented them. He claimed that what contributed to this problem was that the provincial government operated as a "separate entity" from the public and therefore did not bother to build the trust of the people. Zia said excuses by Governor Duraid Kashmoula and Vice Governor Khassro Goran that the highly centralized federal government did not allow them to do their job were false. Zia accused the two, and the majority Kurdish provincial council, of concentrating more on "political gains" rather than helping the people. He said, for example, that during the CPA days the provincial government was given funding but had not, to this day, produced results. Zia said he believed the Sunnis would simply do a better job with governance and administrative issues than the Kurds. He claimed that a "more representative" Sunni-led government would concentrate more on providing basic public services, such as clean water and electricity.

AN END TO KURDISH INFLUENCE?

¶ 15. (C) Zia said expectations that a new Sunni Arab provincial government might be able to limit Kurdish influence -- such as flags and Peshmerga -- in Nineva would largely depend on how the new federal government was formed. He said events in Baghdad

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would directly affect power-sharing arrangements in Nineva, which might also influence Kurdish symbolic presence in the province.

SECURITY

¶ 16. (C) Zia said he expected security to improve as well with a Sunni Arab-dominated provincial government. He said the two groups of Sunnis -- political leadership and terrorists -- would square off, with the political side eventually succeeding in pacifying the terrorist elements. Zia claimed, however, that the process would take time and therefore security problems would not disappear overnight. He claimed that the more diverse the provincial government, the better security would be in the province.

TIMELINE AND POWER BROKERS

¶ 17. (C) Zia said he did not expect provincial elections to take place until later this year. He said the new national government would have to rewrite all of the laws pertaining to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), as well as change leadership within that organization before any elections could take place. Zia said the Al-Najafi family, led by the Minister of Industry and Minerals Abdulaziz Al-Najafi, would likely be the next power family in Nineva. He said the Al-Najafis fought hard to gain power in 2004 after the assassination of former governor Osama Kashmoula (current governor Duraid Kashmoula's cousin), but that they eventually lost to the Kashmoula family. He said that the Al-Najafi family's desire to sit at the seat of power had not diminished. However, Zia said that he did not have specific names of which

Al-Najafi family members would run for office.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) Gevara Zia has been a reliable contact for the PRT in the past, and his views on the ground in Ninewa should not be taken lightly. He has served on the provincial council since January 2005, and has been known as one of the few members who consistently stand up to the council's Kurdish leadership. While his comments should not be taken as gospel, his insight into provincial politics tracks with other voices we have heard, especially outside Mosul: that the current leadership is detached, and will pay for its detachment at the polls.

MUNTER